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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFGHANISTAN MISSILE PLAN U.S.-IRAQ
GERMANY-U.S.;BERLIN

- A. Lead Stories Summary
- B. (Afghanistan) NATO Mission
- C. (NATO-Russia) Air Defense Missile System
- D. (U.S.-Iraq) Iranian Influence
- E. (Germany-U.S.) El-Masri Trial

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A. Lead Stories Summary HEADLINES

To Reach Agreement Coalition Parties Use Working Groups And Review Boards (Frankfurter Allgemeine)

NATO Starts Large-Scale Offensive Against Taliban (Sueddeutsche Zeitung)

State Has To Repay Billions To Investors (Die Welt)

Union Parties Throwing Spanners in Van Der Leyen's Work (Frankfurter Rundschau, Berliner Zeitung)

Union Parties Do Not Support Van Der Leyen And Daycare Centers (Tagesspiegel)

Editorials focused on the talks between the coalition parties, the decision by the European Court of Justice that the government has to repay investors, and the NATO offensive in Afghanistan. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with reports on the meeting between the CDU/CSU and the SPD in Berlin.

B. (Afghanistan) NATO Mission

1. Peter Kapern commented on national radio station Deutschlandfunk of Cologne (3/6):

"In the framework of ISAF and Enduring Freedom, the Western allies did many thing wrong. The main mistake was that they were too hesitant when it came to winning the hearts and minds of the liberated people by building hospitals, schools, and roads.... But the wind is now blowing from a different direction within the Alliance. The civilian component is now to be strengthened, but the ground must be prepared first. And this is the reason why NATO will send another 4,500 forces to Afghanistan today. But unlike previous operations, reconstruction helpers will immediately follow NATO forces. If this really happens...in future operations, NATO can still win the war against the Taliban.... But those who do not offer this support and stay entrenched in the safe north of Afghanistan or behind former Bundestag mandates will forfeit the chance to make the reconstruction of the country possible...."

2. "Achilles Heel Afghanistan"

Martin Winter had this to say in an editorial in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (3/7):

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"NATO is preparing for a great strike, but if it fails, Afghanistan will be in deep trouble - as will be the Alliance.... NATO has no other option and has its back to the wall because it grossly neglected to do those things that could have served as a successful example in the fight against terrorism: an uncompromising military struggle against al-Qaida and the Taliban and, at the same time, fully concentrating on the establishment of a free and civilized society. Time is now running out...."

3. "Makeshift Program"

Jrg Reckmann noted in an editorial in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (3/7):

"Thus far, nothing has really worked in Afghanistan despite all the nice speeches and impressive figures. Drug cultivation is at a record high, the government in Kabul remains weak, and corruption is rampant. Even generals are now saying that the war cannot be won militarily and that it is not possible to win the hearts and minds of Afghans. How can they do this in view of mounting civilian casualties? That is why this NATO offensive resembles a makeshift program rather than a potential triumph. For this is the Achilles heel of the alliance: In Afghanistan, NATO is fighting a losing battle, but it is not allowed to admit this. And the American fixation on military aspects prevents a political turnaround that Europe is striving for."

4. "Supply And Demand"

Daniel Deckers deals with the drug cultivation in Afghanistan and said in an editorial in center-right Frankfurter Allgemeine (3/7):

"Even after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Europeans and Americans were not able to slow the growth of the drug economy. NATO's offensive is likely to improve the situation only for the time being. But the West itself should know best why the situation is as it is: In the 1990s, demand in Europe only created the enormous supply from the Hindu Kush, while the Americans did not even look at the situation because Afghan drugs were not destined for their markets. But if the law of the markets are part of the problem, then they should also be part of the solution. What about reducing demand instead supplies?"

5. "Greetings From The Soviets"

Right-of-center Neue Osnabr|cker Zeitung (3/7) carried an editorial by Michael Clasen:

"The governments in Washington and London, like Bundeswehr

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generals, remained too long with the erroneous belief that the Taliban could be defeated. Bush and Blair understood too late that Afghanistan is developing into a second Iraq. Since NATO partners such as Germany and Italy refuse to send combat forces, the British and Americans have mobilized their last reserves. But they are not enough to pacify the war-torn regions. NATO is threatening to witness the same fate as the Soviets, who came as 'red friends' to the Hindu Kush, and a few years later, were defeated and withdrew as occupiers."

C. (NATO-Russia) Air Defense Missile System

1. "Europe's Defense"

Clemens Wergin noted in an editorial in centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (3/7):

"It is a strange view that ten interceptors would be able to weaken the thousands of missiles deployed in Russian arsenals. But questions relating to the strategic balance have always touched upon basic European fears from the Cold War, and that is why the U.S. plans meet with skepticism. Russian threats have intimidated Europe...even though the advantages of the U.S. missile plan are obvious. The goal is not to allow rogue states to blackmail the West.... We can only welcome a program that is directed against such missiles [from rogue states]....

"It is correct that the Americans could have been smarter in presenting their plan, even though Russia was consulted at least ten times last year. Vladimir Putin is now playing 'Test the West.' and is trying to drive a wedge into NATO. It is typical of the state of the strategic debate in Europe that many, despite this obvious maneuver, are now led up by the garden path. As a matter of fact,

it should be easy to achieve both: to build a protective shield against rogue states and to agree on an inspection regime for the Russians that will guarantee that they the new system is not a threat to their deterrence. It is in Europe's interest that this balance is not imperiled, but also that Europe cannot be blackmailed or attacked by rogue states."

D. (U.S.-Iraq) Iranian Influence

1. "Not Learned Its Lesson"

Hubert Wetzel opined in an editorial in business daily Financial Times Deutschland of Hamburg (3/7):

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"The increase in Iranian power is hitting Riyadh where it lives. Until a few years ago, Tehran was trapped between two hostile regimes, the one of Saddam in Iraq and the one of the Taliban in Afghanistan. For Saudi Arabia, this was a comfortable situation because Saddam was a brutal dictator who hated the Iranians in the east more than the kingdom in the south. The Taliban was a political group running amuck, but they are Sunnis whose extremism exceeded the radicalism of the Wahhabitism only by minor degrees.

"In the course of their anti-terror war, the United States removed these two obstacles that limited Tehran's claim of hegemony in the Persian Gulf. That is why Iran has now turned into an avenger of Islamic honor.... But it remains a mystery why Washington is now supporting [Saudi Arabia's] containment policy against Tehran. It is true that the United States is not interested in an Iranian hegemonic power...but the strengthening of Sunni extremists is simply adventurous.

"Washington should remember the results of the last attempt to use Sunni fighter as an instrument [for its policy]...and it is tantamount to incitement to murder to stir up the Sunni-Shiite rivalry in the region. Because of this rivalry, Iraq is drowning in blood.... At the moment, it is unclear to what extent the U.S. administration supports the Saudi strategy to play the 'Sunni card' in the struggle against Tehran. There are indications that this card is being played by hardliners around Vice President Cheney.... Secretary Rice's announcement that the United States would take part in a multilateral conference on the stabilization of Iraq together with her Iranian counterpart, and the current restrained U.S. behavior in the nuclear conflict with Tehran indicate that the U.S. government has some cooler heads. The struggle between doves and hawks in Washington is not new and, in this respect, Rice acted smarter than her helpless predecessor Colin Powell. It may be possible that she wins, but we should not bet on this."

E. (Germany-U.S.) El-Masri Trial

1. "Quashed"

Washington correspondent Friedemann Diederichs filed the following editorial for centrist Schweriner Volkszeitung (3/6) and centrist Flensburger Tageblatt (3/6):

"German national Khaled el-Masri, who was born in Lebanon, again failed in his attempt to have U.S. courts deal with his kidnapping by the CIA.... This is hardly a surprise. U.S. courts thus continue their questionable tactic of stonewalling, in which the alleged threat to national security serves as a worn-down argument

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to quash a trial. But it is not understandable how U.S. national security can be jeopardized through a compensation suit initiated by someone who was inadvertently and innocently kidnapped.

"There are no doubts about the most important facts...and the international arrest warrants issued in Munich speak volumes. The

argument of the U.S. appeals court that certain working methods of the intelligence service could now be unmasked is not persuasive. The methods of the intelligence officials in the fight against terror have been documented not only by fact-finding committees but also by the media. The conclusion is that political pressure from the top resulted in the defeat of a plaintiff."

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